

The Divinity of Christ.

BEING THE
SUBSTANCE
OF A
DISCOURSE

Delivered in DUBLIN,

In the YEAR 1746.

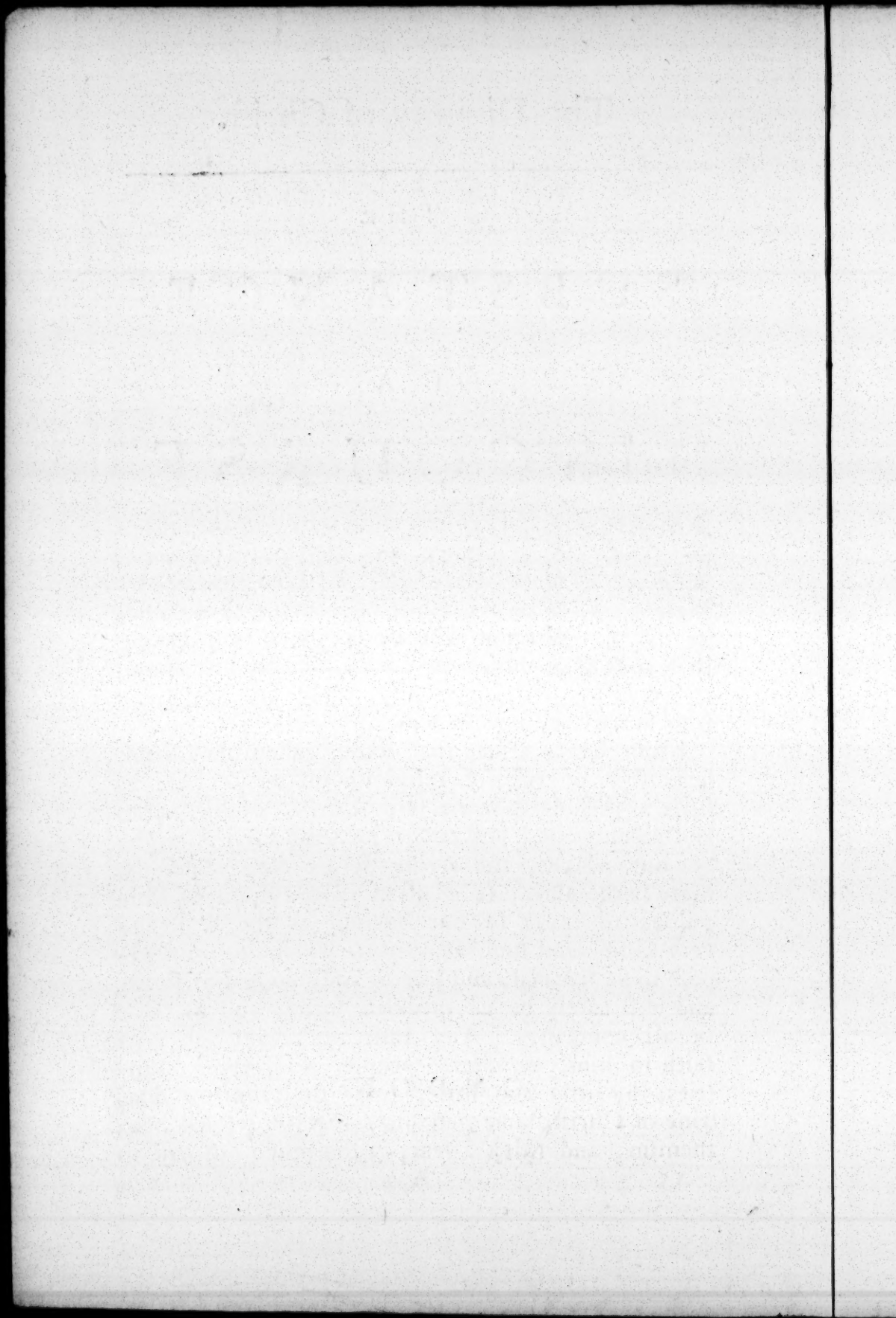
By JOHN CENNICK.

“ Every tongue shall confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” Phil. ii. 11.—“ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ,” Acts. ii. 36.

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MATT. xvi. 13 and 15:

“Jesus asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? Whom do ye say that I am?”

THE chief reason why our Saviour is so slighted, and why his words are of so little weight with the greatest part of mankind, is, because they do not know who he is. And even among those who are called by his name, and read his scriptures daily, there are not many who heartily believe in him.

From hence it is, that some, when they speak seriously, or talk of religious matters, chuse as little as possible to name Jesus Christ, or his merits and redemption, but rather mention God Almighty, our Maker, the divine Being, &c. And the more is the pity. It is often looked upon as ridiculous to speak of our Saviour as the true and very God; and such as venture to do it, must expect to be scorned, and jeered, and laughed at for it, and will surely be as speckled birds, and as fools in all company. And thus for want of true faith in him, ministers, people, and whole countries, by little and little, leave the primitive doctrine of Christ, and get into a sort of refined heathenism; and this, I fear, is too much our case in

these realms, where once the churches looked upon the Redeemer as their only Lord*, and watered this doctrine with the blood of some hundreds of martyrs; and upon which our English church solemnly professes to be built in all her articles and homilies.

In opposing superstition and the unreasonable and unscriptural principles of a degenerate church, some have unawares denied the faith, and rushed into infidelity, and a modest sort of atheism. To prevent my christian brethren from this, I will endeavour, if possible, to be a means; and therefore have chosen this text, which are the words of our Saviour to his disciples, and which I will speak of in order.

Our Saviour knew what was in man, and needed not that any one should teach him; but to prove his disciples, he once asked them, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" they answered, "Some say thou art Elias, others say thou art Jeremias; and some think thou art John the Baptist, or one of the old prophets risen from the dead." How confused were many at that time, and how few thought right! But it seems much the same even now, for see how all men differ in their judgments about him. The Turks say, he was a just person, a prophet of God, but no more. The Jews are divided; the most part look upon him as a deceiver, and the very destroyer of their religion and country, and do not like to hear of him, while a few, less rash, think better of him; but none will bear to hear that he is the Lord Jehovah; in them is that scripture fulfilled, "He came to his own, and his own received him not," John i. 11.

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* See the hymn after the Communion.

Among the nominal, or so called, christians, men who confess the truth of the New-Testament, how many opinions are there? Some look upon the Son of Man as a prophet, and apostle of God, the last and greatest of all the seers, or one of the highest of the principalities, whom God has honoured and appointed to be the Founder of our religion and pattern of christianity; which religious order he stored with divine and wholesome laws, perfected its precepts, lived in it a holy life, as a pattern and example; and, at last, after he had been a preacher of the best doctrines and solid morality, died a martyr for his religion. There are others who think him still more, and conclude, that "no man could do the miracles that he did, except God was with him;" and these can easily consent that he is the Son of God, and no mere man, but nevertheless will have a God whom they call the Father greater than he, and above him; and are far from meaning Jesus, when they read or speak of God Almighty; neither do they worship or pray to him as the Lord of heaven and earth, Jehovah.

From whence proceed these different principles of Christ? Why from hence, being ignorant of the scriptures and the power of God. If they had known the scriptures they would answer chearfully when asked, "What do ye think of Christ? he is the Lord, the Lord from heaven, the I AM; him, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the God of our Fathers, the Lord God Almighty;" for thus the scriptures preach him every where. And had their hearts ever been enlightened by the Father; had they ever been taught of the Holy Ghost, or felt the power of God upon their own souls, they would
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confess with Thomas, "Thou art my Lord and my God!" or with St. Peter, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God!" And in another place, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Luke v. 8.

Thus it is then that men are prone to err, and judge according to their own weak reason, that neither the best confessions of faith, creeds, articles, homilies, liturgies, nor even the scripture itself, without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, can make them think rightly, or believe worthily, of the Son of Man our Lord.

What will be most proper to be considered in this discourse will be,

First, The divinity of Jesus Christ, and his eternal being and supremacy before all worlds, of all which he is the Maker, Lord, and Upholder.

Secondly, The doctrine of his humanity, or that mystery of grace, his holy incarnation; and for what end he was made man, and suffered death.

Thirdly, The hearty confession of a truly christian man. .

I shall confine myself to speak only as the oracles of God, and to say none other, in defence and proof of these things, than what Moses, the prophets, the Psalms, and witnesses of Jesus have before spoken. The church, which is the pillar and ground of truth, has always received the testimony of the scriptures; and we know, "if any man hear not these, then neither would he be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Where
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some have dared to question their veracity and truth, and ventured imprudently to jest or trifle with the words of God, against their own conscience; such I leave to the Judge of all the earth, who in "that day shall judge the dead out of the things written in the book;" and on purpose I will speak only to those who receive the scriptures as the true sayings of God.

I believe no one can read the bible, and count Christ's divinity a new doctrine; for then he must have eyes and not see, and ears and not hear, since all the prophets have witnessed of him, and put it out of doubt, that he is the same that appeared to the fathers, the Holy One of Israel, the true God and eternal life; and this will be plain from what follows.

It is said in the 18th chap. of Gen. "The Lord appeared to Abraham, that Abraham saw him, that he pleaded with him, that the Lord went his way from communing with him," &c. In the 26th chap. it is said again, "The Lord appeared to Isaac:" And in the 32d chap. "He met Jacob, wrestled with him, gave him a new name," &c. And Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face;" and from hence he was called, "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," i. e. the God who appeared to them, whom they served, and who blessed them.

In like manner he appeared to Moses, not only when he was hid in the rock, and the glory of God passed before him, and he saw the back parts of Jehovah, but it is also said, "He saw a similitude of God more than other prophets, and spake with him face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend," Exod. xxxiii. 11. Numb. xii. 8. So Monoah and
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his wife saw God, Judges¹ xiii. 22. So Joshua saw the Lord and worshipped him, as the Lord of hosts, Joshua v. 14. Micaiah says, "I saw the Lord," 1 Kings xxii. 19. Isaiah says the same, "I also saw the Lord," Isa. vi. 1. And Daniel says "I beheld the Ancient of Days," Dan. vii. 9. After all which our Saviour affirms, "No man hath seen the Father," John vi. 46. "Him whom ye say is your God, no man hath seen at any time," John i. 18. 1 John iv. 12. But then who was it that appeared? Whom did Moses and the prophets see? It was Jesus Christ: All saw him and spake of him: "All the scriptures testify of him," John v. 39. "He is the Lord," Acts ix. 17. "He is the Almighty," Rev. i. 8. "He is the true God," 1 John v. 20. "He is the only Lord God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," Jude, ver. 4.

This Job knew well when he said, "God shall stand the latter day upon the earth, whom I shall see in my flesh," Job xix. 25, 26. And David, throughout the Psalms, calls him, "My Lord, my Saviour, my Light, my Redeemer: The Lord is my Shepherd," Ps. xxiii. "The Lord is my Rock," Ps. xviii. 2. We know our Saviour applies this to himself, and says, "I am the good Shepherd," John x. 11. St. Paul also says, "The Rock is Christ," 1 Cor. x. 4. Even the unutterable name which God named to Moses out of the bush (and which is looked upon as the most dreadful and sacred of all the names of God) our Saviour appropriates to himself, and for which cause the Jews were about to stone him: See John viii. 24 and 58. Should we search diligently the prophets and the Psalms concerning Jesus, we should soon see, that the Saviour born to us, is Christ the Lord: The Son given to us is the Mighty of God, the everlasting Father, the Most Holy, the Redeemer,

deemer, the God of the whole earth, Luke ii. 11. Isa. ix. 6. Dan. ix. 24. Isa. liv. 5. Yea, Isaiah, who, on account of his great insight into the person and kingdom of Christ, has been called the evangelical prophet, boldly asserts, "He is God, and there is none else, the Lord, a just God, and a Saviour, and there is none besides him," Isa. xiv. 5, 21, 22. It is to the Son David he saith, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom, &c. Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they shall all wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed, but thou art THE SAME, and thy years shall not fail," Heb. i. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Isaiah, when he saw his glory afar off, knew he would one day tabernacle with men; and had foretold "his name shall be Immanuel," Isa. vii. 14. or, as St. Paul hath it, "God manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. So Micah, speaking of God's birth in the world, says, concerning his eternal existence, "his goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting," Micah v. 2.

But why need I to use so many arguments, or bring more proofs to make it clear, that this doctrine of the Son of Man's Godhead is according to the scriptures, since "his name is above every name that is named in heaven?" Phil. ii. 9. and since all the angels of God, or all the Elohim, or God's worship before him: and the whole first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews was written to prove the same thing; namely, that Jesus is no created being, no angel, in the common sense, no

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inferior deity, but the Maker and Supporter of all worlds and creatures, the very essence and express image and person of God, whom all creatures and angels serve, and before whom all the gods fall down and worship.

That he is more than all prophets and sons of God is evident also from Heb. iii. 3. "This Man is counted worthy of more honour than Moses, in as much as he who has builded the house, has more honour than the house, because he built the house, which house we are; and is before all things, and author of all, whether angels, principalities, thrones, or men, visible or invisible; and is heir and inheritor of all, supporting them by the word of his power; God over all blessed for ever," Heb. i. 2, 3. John i. 3, 10. Rom. ix. 5. xi. 36.

But to say no more, if he be not God, verily and truly, how can we blame the Jews for going about to stone him? or how can we say, "with wicked hands they have crucified and slain him?" Since their reasons for it were, Because of blasphemy, in that he being a man made himself God, John x. 33. and because he said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," John viii. 58. And this was their accusation before Pilate, "He ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God," John xix. 7. My dear brethren, there is no medium, either he is God, or a blasphemer. If he be God, then give him his honour, and serve him as God; and if not, then do not be any longer called by his name; openly join the Turks and Jews, and cry out, "Away with him from the earth! We will not have this Man to reign over us!"

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So sure were the cloud of his witnesses, and the noble army of martyrs, of the eternal divinity of their Master, that they would know no other, preached no other, but agreed to publish through the earth the doctrine they had received of their Head. "All men must honour the Son, even as the Father: He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father," John v. 23. "He that is not in the doctrine of the Son, he is without God, he is an Atheist," 2 John 9. Among the faithful assertors of this true doctrine, St. Paul is particular; he tells the Ephesians, "at that time that ye were without Christ, ye were without God in the world," Eph. ii. 12. And again, "In him dwelleth the whole fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9. But all this we have immediately from the Lord and Bishop of our Souls himself: For when Philip wanted once to see the Father, of whom he had heard Jesus say so much, and thought then he should be fully satisfied, our Saviour said to him, "Philip, have I been so long with you, and you have not seen me? He that seeth me, seeth the Father: I am in the Father, and the Father in me," John xiv. 9, 10.

The whole book of the Revelations teacheth us, that "Jesus is he, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty: He who is God and the Almighty in the midst of the throne: He before whom all sing and worship upon their faces, casting down their crowns to the ground at his feet, because he has been slain: He who is the King of kings and Lord of lords: He who shall judge the world, and is the First and the Last;" and who is, as St. Peter and Paul declare him, "The Lord of all," Acts x. 36.

I pass by, on purpose, many places of this kind because if I should bring all the proofs which could be brought, to shew who the Son of Man is, I must then bring all the bible, for all testify of him, all confess him the Lord, beside martyrs and confessors, without number, who all sung their hymns, according to Pliny, to one Jesus, whom they (i. e. christians) honoured and worshipped as God; and this the venerable council of Nice confirmed, and all the churches of Christ in the east and west, and in every age, both received and preached this doctrine: for upon this Rock is the whole universal or catholic church built, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. These scriptures, however, may be enough to prove, that Jesus is indeed the everlasting Lord God, who made heaven and earth, the One God spoken of by all the prophets, the Supreme Maker and Ruler of all worlds, and who, with all his greatness and majesty, is Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Now I come, secondly, to speak of the humanity of the Most High, and for what end God humbled himself to put on our nature; and this is well expressed in the words of the Nicene creed: "For us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, and was made man:" or in St. John's gospel, after he had asserted the word, or Logos, was God, and without him was not any thing made that is made, he says, "and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among Us," John i. 14. And the same apostle even determines hereby who are of God; namely, those who confess him in the flesh, and forbids to believe or receive any other doctrine, because he says it is of antichrist, and of the false prophet, to deny him in the flesh, 1 John iv. 2. Since
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then this is so material a matter, let us give the more earnest heed to it, for no mystery of grace or power is greater or more sacred than this, God manifest in the flesh. As surely as Jesus is very and essentially God, equal to the Father, and the Holy Ghost, in the blessed Trinity, so also is he very and true man, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, "and became like us in all things, sin only excepted." This was needful, for else he could not have suffered or died; and in this respect, he who was God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself, and was in form of a servant, and differed nothing from a servant, though he was Lord of all: And in this estate it was true, the Father was greater than he, and every angel higher than he, "since for the suffering of death he was made a little lower than the angels," Heb. ii. 9.

Here then come and worship, and adore, and be astonished all who hear me! to see him who made you, and is the very image and brightness of the Father, made a man, and appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh. See him before whom the seraphims covered their faces in their wings, now the Son of Man, and the offspring of David. He humbles himself, and appears in our nature and image when we had lost and forfeited his. He lays by all the glory of a Son, and is a servant under the law, that we who were servants, might receive the glory and honour to become sons of God. Here, then, see how he loved us. He did not stoop to be an angel, or wear the form of a seraphim, though that had been amazing humility, but stooped yet far lower, and became man! Why this was necessary, and why God would vouchsafe

vouchsafe so to abase himself] was, That as by man came sin, so by man might sin be taken away: "That as by one man's disobedience all became sinners, so by the obedience of one Man all might become righteous." Redemption was his divine aim through the whole; and therefore, when he saw sin enter into the world, and beheld the dreadful effects of it upon every creature, and knew how the curse, and death, and hell, would ruin justly all mankind, he pitied us, or, as it is expressed in Ezekiel, "saw us in our blood, and had compassion on us." He knew he had not made us to destroy us, nor could delight in the death of a sinner, or even bear to see us lost without help. No, far be such thoughts from our hearts; he loved us with everlasting love, and resolved to be our Saviour. His heart yearned over us, and was touched with our miseries and sad estate; and though he knew before hand what it would cost him to save us with equity, and to bring us out of the hands of the enemy, with righteousness, yet he determined, cost what it would, to save us. He foresaw what he must endure in our stead, what horror and distress he must sustain in making an atonement for us; considered how our punishment would make him sweat blood, and endure the pangs of hell and death, yet he was bent upon our delivery, and saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied.

This was then the great end of our Lord Jehovah's incarnation, that he might be capable of dying for his church, and suffering in our stead, and so clear, and absolve, and justify us before his throne, and reconcile us to his Father and our Father, and make up our breach, Here at once he makes all
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his angels see how he loved us; and to make a perfect and infinite amends and satisfaction, he decrees to offer up himself, and "bear all our sins in his own body on the tree." He knew no creature could undertake this work, nor indeed would he trust any one with the souls who were so precious in his sight, or hazard their perishing eternally, through the default of him to whom he should trust the redemption. He only was worthy in heaven and earth, and under the earth, to be the Saviour; and therefore when the appointed time came, the day of God's vengeance, he came down ready, into the world, to meet the storm, and drink up the curse in his own flesh and blood. Therefore he uses that similitude in the gospel, "I would have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." We know how the careful hen behaves, when the sky lowers and threatens a storm, she spreads out her wings over her chickens, and sits contented in the shower and tempest to shelter and screen them; and often it has been seen, that a hen has really died and perished over her young, when the storm of heavy hail or rain has been great. But now forget where you are, and let me lead you to mount Calvary, and I will shew you the antitype of all this and greater love: there Jesus, the God of all flesh, and Shepherd of the sheep, when he saw the wrath like a black cloud lower, or, as he says in the Psalms, "when the water-spouts of God threatened," he made ready, put on our nature, and stretched out his arms upon the cross, as the hen stretches out her wings, and calls to all his guilty children, "Come unto me: turn ye to the strong hold, till the wrath be overpast;" and there does he die
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in the distressing stormy wind and tempest: The billows went over his head; the sword of the Lord awakened upon him; and the deep waters entered his soul; but there he hung amidst all, that he might be a hiding place to his people, a refuge and a sanctuary to his guilty flock, and did not grudge to die, treading, as it were, the wine-press of the wrath of God, so he might thereby but spare the souls, and gather them to him as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings: and this is true, whoever flies to him, or escapes to that Shelter, shall be safe, they shall find a rest for their souls. This was his aim in becoming a man, his design in tabernacling among us, "that to him shall all flesh come; and that whosoever would come to him should find everlasting life: This many thousand souls find true daily, and experience in their hearts assuredly, that they are safe in him, and no man shall pluck them out of his hands. O blessed Refuge! O happy refugees! would to God that all who hear me this day had found him their strong hold, their place to flee to in time of trouble, and knew his everlasting arms were over them, to shelter and bless them, and underneath to keep them lest they should fall! Would to God all that are here did hereby perceive the love of God, that he laid down his life for us! Would to God that all overseers, ministers, and shepherds, in the service of the chief Priest, would but hence learn how God loved the world, and would not spare any pains, or cares, or labour, night or day, to help and feed the church, which God purchased with his own blood, but let all men see, by their diligence and concern
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for the salvation of men, that they believe in their hearts what they read and confess with their lips, concerning the love of Christ, and this his merciful and glorious redemption. Whoever have known him, have known him God Almighty: and of this their inmost heart is persuaded by the Holy Ghost; and whoever have got his redemption, are out of doubt that their sins have been washed away, and their raiment made white in the blood of the Lamb. It is such who worship him as their true Lord and Saviour; and such only can properly answer to his question, "Whom do you say that I am?" These, without hesitation, without much time to reflect, and without all doubt know and can answer, "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God! Thou art the Lord! Thou art my Lord and my God!"

This brings me to the third thing proposed: Since this is the confession of a true christian man, to answer to that question of the Lord Christ, "Whom do you say that I am? Whom dost thou say that I the Son of Man am?" Here the believer is not at a loss, he believes Jesus Christ is his God and Maker, and has saved him by dying for him in his flesh, else he believes nothing at all, and is not worthy to be called by his name; and even his calling him Lord, Lord, is taking his name in vain. But, as I said, a believer, a true christian, a child of God, a disciple or follower of Christ, is one who has not satisfied or contented himself with the name of a christian, or with hearing the gospel of salvation, or with performing pious deeds, or good works, &c. alone, but has obtained of the Holy Ghost a living faith in the Godhead and blood of our Saviour, and knows and feels that

all his sins and offences are pardoned and done away, and he is justified justly by Christ's death, who gave himself in his stead, and suffered, and underwent his curse to save and redeem him. This he firmly depends upon and is comforted, and lives a happy and good life, to the honour of the holy name which is named upon him. Nor is such an one afraid or ashamed to acknowledge Jesus before men; nor will that God, in whom he believes, be ashamed of him before the angels, when he shall come at the latter day in the glory of his Father: But here, in an adulterous generation, where men do not love him, nor live to please him: Here, where Satan's seat is, and where many despise the foolishness of the preaching of the cross, he continues a witness of the Lamb, and when asked, Whom do you say that Jesus is? can make this happy answer, I believe he is the God of the whole earth, my Saviour and my Redeemer.

I believe that Jesus Christ who was born in Bethlehem of the virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate without the gates of Jerusalem, is verily, truly, and eternally God, the same person all the scriptures mention and treat of, and whom all true believers in all ages have known and worshipped, as the Holy One of Israel, the God of all mankind.

I believe God, the whole Godhead by him made heaven and earth, and all the worlds, things visible and invisible; that he made me body and soul, and saw me from his throne in my sinful estate, and loved and pitied me, and, in due time, was a man for my sake; and by his obedience and meritorious life and death, has now fully atoned for all my misdeeds and sins, and made me thereby
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just in the sight of God, and the whole blessed Trinity. I believe this Jesus Christ is my God, my Lord, my Righteousness, my holiness, my redemption; the only wisdom which can do me good; my Saviour in time and in eternity; and I will hereon venture my body and soul for ever and ever.

I believe also and confess, that though I have been unworthy of his mercy, and no more deserved his favour, that yet, out of his free grace his Holy Spirit has awakened and called me out of all my sins, and made me to be concerned about my eternal state, and athirst for mercy and righteousness; that then it pleased the Son of God my Saviour to reveal his love in my heart, and to manifest himself to me, so that now I know I am his, and he is mine. He loves me and I him; and whether I live or die, I am his, who both lived and died, and rose and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and of the living.

I believe when I depart out of this world I shall go to him in peace; and when my pilgrimage and warfare is ended, I shall find a rest with him upon his throne; and without tasting death, his angels shall carry me to his bosom, and I shall enter by the gates into the paradise of God, and follow him upon Mount Zion with the church of the first-born, and with the spirits of just men made perfect; with whom I shall sit down in white raiment in the temple of God, and go no more out.

I believe that a day shall come when all people shall see the same Jesus that was crucified, coming in the clouds, and then every tongue shall confess his divinity, and every knee bow before him, who then shall appear in his Father's glory with all his
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faints and angels; and shall himself judge the world in righteousness, and save whom he will. In that day it shall be out of doubt who the Son of Man is; for heaven, and earth, and hell shall know he is the only Potentate, the God of gods, and Lord of lords; and all those that would not have him to reign over them, shall flee before him. Then I believe he will confess me, and not be ashamed of me; and on this I depend with all my heart. To him, with his Father, and my Father, and to the Holy Ghost, One God blessed for ever, be salvation and praise, henceforth world without end. Amen.

F I N I S.



